

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION TO SECSTATE INFO PHNOM PENH SAIGON
VIENTIANE AUG 1, 1973 REPEATED TO YOU:

S E C R E T BANGKOK 11856

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, TH

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH PRIME MINISTER THANOM

REF: A. STATE 144716

B. STATE 150845

C. STATE 150842

SUMMARY: PRIMIN THANOM AND SENIOR RTG OFFICES LISTENED
ATTENTIVELY TO AMBASSADOR'S PRESENTATION ON US POLICY RE
CAMBODIA, FUTURE OF US PRESENCE IN THAILAND AND US MILITARY
ASSISTANCE TO THAI FORCES. DURING DISCUSSION THAIS INDICATED
DEEP CONCERN FOR FUTURE OF GKR AND IMPLICATIONS OF
CAMBODIAN SITUATION FOR THAI SECURITY, UNDERSTANDING OF
PRESENT US POSITION REGARDING REDUCTIONS IN US FORCES
STATIONED IN THAILAND, AND DESIRE FOR MODERNIZATION OF THAI
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FORCES WHEN US WITHDRAWS. THANOM PLANS UNILATERAL PRESS
STATEMENT TODAY ALONG LINES OF SUGGESTED US TEXT. END
SUMMARY.

1. AMBASSADOR MET AUGUST 1 MORNING FOR 90 MINUTES WITH PRIMIN THANOM KITTIKACHORN TO REVIEW ANSWERS PROVIDED REFTELS A AND B TO RTG QUESTIONS REGARDING US POLICY ON CAMBODIA AFTER AUGUST 15, FUTURE OF US PRESENCE IN THAILAND AND FUTURE US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THAILAND. THANOM, SUPPORTED BY ACM DAWEE, DEPFONMIN CHARTCHAI, AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON ANAND, AND STAFF, LISTENED ATTENTIVELY AND TOOK ACTIVE PART IN DISCUSSION.

2. INTRODUCING HIS PRESENTATION, AMBASSADOR STRESSED UNDERSTANDING OF THAI CONCERNS WHICH HE HAD ENCOUNTERED DURING RECENT CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON, AND US DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE EXCHANGES OF VIEWS WITH THAI LEADERSHIP DURING CRUCIAL PERIOD AHEAD. DRAWING HEAVILY ON REF B. EMPHASIZING EXTENT OF US COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT OF GKR AFTER AUGUST 15, AMBASSADOR ADDED DETAILS OF MILITARY AID DELIVERIES AND STRESSED CONTRIBUTION OF AIR DELIVERIES FROM THAI BASES AND TRAINING IN THAILAND. HE ALSO OUTLINED US ECONOMIC AID, NOTED THAT THIS INCLUDED COMMITMENT TO PAY FOR RICE GKR SEEKING TO PROCURE FROM THAILAND TO MEET ESSENTIAL NEEDS AND EXPRESSED HOPE NEXT 5,000 TONS INCREMENT WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE SOONEST AND 25,000 SOON THEREAFTER. THANOM MADE NO COMMITMENT BUT WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE RTG WILL COME THROUGH.

3. ADDRESSING QUESTION OF US MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND ALONG LINES OUTLINED REF A, AMBASSADOR RECALLED COMMON US-RTG COMMITMENT OVER MANY YEARS TO ACHIEVE LASTING PEACE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. IN THE WAKE OF THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE US MAINTAIN STRENGTH IN THE AREA TO ENFORCE THE AGREEMENTS, AND AT THIS TIME PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO AVOID ANY DAMAGING POLITICAL SIGNAL TO HANOI UNTIL THERE IS REAL SECURITY IN THE AREA. LOOKING TO THE LONGER RANGE, WE WOULD LIKE TO KEEP OPEN THE OPTIONS OF RETAINING A MORE LIMITED US PRESENCE AND CONTINGENCY BASING ARRANGEMENTS. AMBASSADOR STRESSED FACT WE INTEND TO REMAIN IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH RTG REGARDING FORCE LEVELS AND ALSO THAT WE WILL COORDINATE OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON
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THIS MATTER WITH RTG AND HOPE THEY WILL DO SAME.

4. REGARDING AID LEVELS, AMBASSADOR MADE POINTS REF B AND DREW ON RECENT CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY BY SECDEF SCHLESINGER AND ADMIRAL MOORER TO EMPHASIZE USG INTENTION TO CONTINUE HIGH PRIORITY FOR THAI MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, WHILE REMINDING THAI LEADERS OF UNCERTAINTIES OF FINAL CONGRESSIONAL ACTION.

5. THANOM OPENED DISCUSSION WITH SEARCHING QUESTIONS ABOUT TIVHTABLE FOR DELIVERY OF ADDED EQUIPMENT FOR FANK AND WHETHER OR NOT FANK ABLE TO USE WEAPONS FOR EFFECTIVE DEFENSE. FOLLOWING AMBASSADOR'S ASSURANCES THAT

ACCELERATED DELIVERIES ALREADY ARRIVING IN PHNOM PENH AND THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO RESUPPLY GKR, INCLUDING USAF DELIVERY OF AMMUNITION AND OTHER SUPPLIES, AFTER AUGUST 15, DAWEE AND CHARTCHAI FOLLOWED UP WITH QUERIES REGARDING BEST US ESTIMATE OF GKR ABILITY TO HOLD PHNOM PENH AFTER AUGUST 15; AMBASSADOR REITERATED CONSTANCY OF US SUPPORT AND OUR BELIEF THAT FANK HAD THE MEANS IN TERMS OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION TO DEFEND THE CAPITAL AND KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN. ASKED ABOUT POSSIBLE ASEAN INITIATIVE TO HELP GKR, CHARTCHAI SAID ASEAN NATIONS HAD AGREED THAT CAMBODIANS SHOULD SOLVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS.

6. DAWEE QUERIED WHETHER THERE WERE ANY PLANS FOR USING SOUTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN SUPPORT OF GKR, AND WHETHER USG WOULD RESTRAIN PRESIDENT THIEU IN THE EVENT OF AN APPEAL FROM LON NOL. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT HE HAD NO INDICATION OF ANY GKR INTENTION TO TURN TO THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE FOR HELP, AND WE DON'T EXPECT THIS TO HAPPEN ON ANY LARGE SCALE, THE RVNAF MIGHT PROVIDE SOME ADDITIONAL PROTECTION FOR MEKONG RIVER CONVOYS, OR SUPPORT ALONG THE BORDER, BUT WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT THE QUESTION OF MAJOR GROUND INTERVENTION WOULD ARISE. AS TO WHETHER WE WOULD ATTEMPT TO STOP THIEU FROM RESPONDING TO A REQUEST FOR HELP FROM LON NOL, THE AMBASSADOR SAID THIS WOULD BE UP TO THE TWO GOVERNMENTS THEMSELVES.

7. DAWEE ALSO RAISED QUESTION OF SEATO COMMITMENTS, IN THE SECRET

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EVENT OF AN APPEAL FROM LON NOL OR OF INCREASED THREAT TO THAILAND. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT THE SEATO COUNCIL WOULD NECESSARILY CONSIDER ANY SUCH NEW SITUATION. IF THAILAND NEEDED MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO MEET AN INCREASED THREAT, WE WOULD EXPECT THIS TO BE A SUBJECT FOR EXAMINATION UNDER MAP.

8. FOLLOWING SOME SPECULATION BY THAIS REGARDING RELATIVE INFLUENCE OF PEKING AND MOSCOW ON KHMER INSURGENTS AND POSSIBLE FUTURE FOR SIHANOUK, AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED VIEW THAT GKR SHOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD PRESENT DEFENSE LINES LONG ENOUGH SO THAT, WITH COMMITMENT FOR CONTINUED US ASSISTANCE, MILITARY SITUATION COULD BE STABILIZED WHILE DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS AND KHMER INTERESTS BROUGHT VARIOUS FACTIONS TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE POLITICAL SOLUTION WHICH WOULD NOT BE ADVERSE TO US AND THAI SECURITY INTERESTS IN SEA,

9. REFERRING TO FUTURE US FORCE LEVELS, PRIN THANOM ASKED WHETHER US CONGRESS MIGHT LEGISLATE WITHDRAWAL FROM THAI BASES AFTER THE AUGUST 15 BOMBING HALT. AMBASSADOR SAID WE HAD NO INDICATION CONGRESS WAS THINKING ALONG THESE LINES AND REMINDED HIM THAT CONGRESS WAS EXPECTED TO RECESS FOR THE

MONTH OF AUGUST; MEANWHILE, IT WAS OUR INTENTION TO STUDY US MILITARY PRESENCE JOINTLY WITH THE THAI, AND WORK OUT AN AGREED POSITION BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL OR OTHER PRESSURES BUILD. ASKED BY CHARTCHAI WHETHER US COULD COMMIT ITSELF TO WITHDRAW A TOKEN 1,000 MEN OR SO WITHIN NEXT MONTH, AMBASSADOR REITERATED IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING SIGNAL TO COMMUNISTS; US WAS FULLY PREPARED TO GO PUBLIC ON THE FACT THAT DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT WERE UNDERWAY BUT FOR REASONS OUTLINED EARLIER AMBASSADOR STRESSED WE WOULD GREATLY PREFER TO AVOID ANY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING ANY PARTICULAR LEVEL OF REDUCTION AT THIS TIME.

10. DISCUSSION OF FUTURE MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOCUSED ON THAI INSISTENCE ON FORCE MODERNIZATION TO COMPENSATE FOR EXPECTED WITHDRAWAL OF US FORCES, RECALLING PARTICULARLY "VIETNAMIZATION" EXPERIENCE WHEREBY DEPARTING US TROOPS TURNED OVER EQUIPMENT TO RVNAF. DAWEE STRESSED THAT RTG DOES NOT WANT B-52'S OR F-111S, BUT ASSERTED THAT SUCH AIRCRAFT AS OV-10'S AND CERTAIN OTHER ITEMS WOULD BECOME SURPLUS TO US OPERATIONAL SECRET

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NEEDS AS THAI-BASED SQUADRONS DISBANDED AND THESE WOULD BE MOST USEFUL TO RTG. AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THAT US PLANS REQUIRED UNITS TO RETAIN THEIR INTEGRAL EQUIPMENT, BUT PROMISED THAT IN COURSE OF JOINT CONSULTATIONS WE WOULD LOOK AT WHAT EQUIPMENT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO THAI GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY TO MEET COUNTERINSURGENCY THREAT, AND SEE WHETHER THERE WAS ANY POSSIBILITY TO LEAVE THAT IN COUNTRY. AMBASSADOR RECALLED THAT THAI MAP ALREADY RECOGNIZED NEED FOR REPLACEMENT OF AGEING VEHICLES AND OTHER US-SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT AND THAT MUCH HAD BEEN AND WAS CONTINUING TO BE DONE ALONG THESE LINES.

11. AFTER READING DEPARTMENT TEXT OF PROPOSED JOINT STATEMENT (REF C), THAIS SUGGESTED THAT ISSUANCE OF JOINT PRESS STATEMENT AFTER CALL BY AMBASSADOR WOULD SET PRECEDENT WHICH PRESS WOULD THEN EXPECT AFTER SIMILAR DISCUSSIONS IN FUTURE. THEREFORE, THAIS PROPOSED THAT THANOM MAKE UNILATERAL STATEMENT ALONG LINES OF US TEXT. RECOGNIZING THAT THAIS CONSIDERED IT POLITICALLY IMPORTANT THAT THAIS SPEAK TO THEIR PUBLIC ALONE AND THAT THANOM HAS REGULAR WEEKLY PRESS CONFERENCE ON WEDNESDAYS, WHEN MEETING WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE SUBJECT OF PRESS QUERIES, AMBASSADOR AGREED. TEXT OF THANOM'S PRESS INTERVIEW WILL BE REPORTED SEPTEL.

12. IN CONCLUSION, THANOM THANK THE AMBASSADOR FOR THE REPLIES TO HIS QUESTIONS, AND PARTICULARLY FOR THE REAFFIRMATION OF US CONCERN FOR EQUIPPING THE THAI ARMED FORCES. THE AMBASSADOR REAFFIRMED HIS INTENTION TO KEEP THANOM INFORMED REGARDING THE PROGRESS OF DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO SOLVE THE CAMBODIAN PROBLEM, WHILE NOTHING THAT THE QUESTIONS OF US FORCE REDUCTIONS AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE WOULD BE SUBJECT OF CONTINUING DIALOGUE IN ESTABLISHED CHANNELS FOR

US-THAI CONSULTATION.

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